

SAN RAMON VALLEY

GENEALOGICAL

SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 305
Diablo, CA 94528-8308
President: Frances Lloyd
Coord. Editor: Sharon Clay
Meetings: 10:00 a.m.
3rd Tues. Of the Month
(Except August & December)
Alamo LDS Church
Stone Valley & Smith Roads - Alamo

Vol. XVII No. 4

November 2001

THIS MONTH -November 20, 2001

EARLIER ENGLISH GENEALOGY

John Glead, speaker at our September meeting, returns to give us more detail on English Genealogy, this time presenting information on researching records before 1837. Parish Registers go back to 1538, and there are a wide range of other earlier record types. Also he will give us details about Local history Societies that can be helpful to the genealogical researcher. His handouts are very helpful and detailed. John has lectured to the California GS, Santa Clara FHC, and Santa Clara CGS, and many more societies..

LAST MEETING- October 16, 2001

Thomas Moore, Contra Costa Coroner's Office

Notes by Lee Schlenker

Thomas Moore, from the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Coroner's Office was our speaker in October. With an extensive background in law enforcement for the past thirty years, he was very interesting. He started from the beginning and gave an insight as to by whom and how things are done in this office.

In the 1600's England had a coroners system. By 1860, Maryland had adopted something similar with physicians being involved in the process. On the East Coast this process is usually done by the Medical Examiner and on the West Coast it is handled within the Sheriff's Department, by the Coroner.

They investigate all violent, sudden or unexpected deaths, SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) or under the age of 12 months deaths with the results being turned over to the State Health Department for further research. Other investigated deaths include occupational deaths, contagious disease deaths, operating room deaths, unidentified deaths, self-induced or criminal abortions.

Their objectives are: (1) to give a positive I.D. (Done through friends and relatives, any physical characteristics, DNA [taking 4-6 months for results], photo I.D., tattoos [suggesting criminal history or gang affiliations], fingerprints and/or dental work); (2) medical cause - this is performed by the forensic pathologist who is usually contracted by the Sheriff's Department, and will determine if it was gunshot, blunt force trauma, heart failure, etc.; (3) determination done with scene investigation, autopsy report

aids in the findings of homicide, suicide, or accidental death.

Only the Coroner orders the autopsy. An autopsy can be protested by written request or protested due to religious beliefs. If there is no body, a petition to establish death is done through the Superior Court in that particular county. Unclaimed body information (finger prints, jaw and tissue samples for DNA, photos of scars, marks, tattoos or other findings) goes to the Department of Justice. DNA is taken from the ribs and teeth of an unknown deceased person. The coroner keeps ALL information forever. Nothing is periodically destroyed.

Coroner's reports are available for viewing or for purchase in person only. The report should contain: the name of a person (if available), date and time of death, summary of circumstances, description of property surrounding area. If there is a death certificate issued less than two years before, you will find it available at the coroner's office. After this two year period, you may obtain it through the County Clerk/Records Office.

A Coroner's inquest is a judicial and official inquiry into the death requested by the Coroner with a 9-member jury, hearing officers and witnesses which is open to the public. These inquests then become public record.

Native American remains are handled first by calling the coroner who comes to identify the remains and then

notifies the Native American Heritage Council. The Council in turn notify the descendants within 24 hours. These remains will then be re-interred properly by the council or the descendants. The skull of a Native American is best identified by the ground-down teeth and the lack of dental work. Native Americans do not have an overbite. It is a Federal law that the Native American Heritage council must be notified. Keeping a Native American artifact of any type is a felony.

For more information about coroner's inquests see page 6.

NOVEMBER 2001 CALENDAR

6 Tuesday - 10:00 a.m. Board Meeting at the Lloyd's home, 210 Town and Country Drive, in Danville.

20 Tuesday - 10:00 a.m. General Meeting at LDS Church, 2949 Stone Valley Road at Smith Road, Alamo. From I-680 freeway, take Stone Valley Road east 2 & 1/3 miles. The speaker will be Mr. John Gleed. He will speak about Earlier English Records, Parish Registers.

27 Tuesday - 9:00 a.m. Departure Time for the Library Trip to the Sutro Library in San Francisco at 480 Winston Dr.. Please note that this is the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Carpools will meet behind Albertson's, off Diablo Road in Danville. The Library Trip Coordinator is Michael Fiorenza. If you sign up for a trip and wish to cancel, please call him at 820-8294. The Sutro Library is part of the Calif. State Library System. Tel (415) 731-4477. California State Library catalog, which includes the Sutro holdings is, <http://www.lib.state.ca.us>. There are over 40,000 book titles, a complete US Census and some State Census records, NY Ship records and many other resource materials. Please see our Societies Handbook page 15 for details. You need not be at the general meeting to sign up for the library trips. Just call Mike Fiorenza the week before the trip to list your name as a participant and let him know if you need a ride to the car pool meeting place.

There will not be any Member Education Class during November or December

NO GENERAL MEETING or Library Trip IN DECEMBER. Most special interest groups will NOT meet during December.

DECEMBER 2001

4 Tuesday - 10:00 a.m. The annual Society Cookie Exchange will be at the home of Frances Lloyd, 210 town and Country Drive in Danville. **Everyone Welcome.** Bring two dozen of your favorite cookies to share. Beverages will be served.

Special Interest Groups: NOVEMBER - 2001

GERMAN - This group will plan to meet on November 28th (fourth Wednesday) 10:00 a.m. at the home of Barbara Johnson, 616 Camino Amigo in Danville. Phone 837-2153 or e-mail bcj616@earthlink.net. If you need directions or cannot attend please let her know.

IRISH & CALIF. - Their meeting date is November 14, (second Wednesday) at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Patty Erickson, 10 Ridge Place in Pleasant Hill. Her e-mail address is russpat@netvista.net Phone: (925) 229-0889.

NEW ENGLAND - The contact person is Barbara Dyer, bdyergen@aol.com or phone 820-9738.

PORTUGUESE - They sometimes meet on the third Tuesday of the month after the general meeting. Confirmation of the meeting will be announced at the general meeting. Bring a bag lunch. The contact person is Millie Freitas, phone: 837-2483

SCANDINAVIA - Those persons interested in Scandinavian research do not meet as a group. They form e-mail groups for each country. The contact person is Marilyn Tanner, phone 376-6733 or e-mail jtanner@nothingbutnet.net.

SOUTHERN - November 13th (second Tuesday of the month) is the typical meeting date for this group at 10:00 a.m. at the Family History Center on Stone Valley Road, in Alamo. The contact person is Frances Becker, phone 934-4962. Group members will be notified by phone, if they plan to meet this month.

PUBLISHING - A future meeting will be scheduled as interested persons express a need. The contact person is Dorothy Stanton, dpstant@hotmail.com

INTERNET - Interested users communicate via e-mail. Members should contact Robert daRoza, vrdaroza@ix.netcom.com to be included.

COMPUTER INTEREST GROUP - They will meet Tuesday, November 20th after the general meeting at about 12:30 p.m. at the home of Peggy Dearman, 749 Morning-home Road, in Danville. Bring a bag lunch. This is a genealogy software users group for PC's and will focus on the use of Master Genealogist. Peggy Dearman is the contact person for the group. Phone 837-1621 or e-mail dearman@pacbell.net MAC users do not currently have an active user group of SRVGS members.

CALENDAR OF OTHER EVENTS NOVEMBER -DECEMBER 2001

8 November, Thursday The Contra Costa County Genealogical Society regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at the LDS Church, 3700 Concord Ave., in Concord.

13 November, Tuesday The Livermore Amador Genealogical Society (LAGS), meets 7:30 p.m. at Beth Emek, 1866 College at South M St., Livermore.

15 November Thursday The Solano County Genealogical Society meeting at 7 p.m. at 1200 Civic Center Drive, in Fairfield.

6 December Thursday Genealogical Society of Vallejo-Benecia meet 1 p.m. at the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum, 734 Marin St. in Vallejo. Rebecca Yerger will speak about "Women in History Who have made a Difference."

Newsletter Team:

Coordinator: Sharon Clay	462-4518 sharoncl@ix.netcom.com
Special Contributor: Pat Isom	820-2660
Calendar Coordinator: Vern Segelke	838-8570 e-mail: V.M. SEG@att.net
Mailing::	
Barbara Dittig	648-9364
Lucy Carver	837-3146

Deadline to put information in the newsletter is the last Thursday of the month.

Treasurer's Report- OCTOBER 2001

by Marilyn Tanner

Beginning Balance:	\$6142.47
Income:	\$ 26.00
Expenses:	170.80

Fund Balances:

General Fund	4315.61
Hospitality Fund	150.79
Newsletter: Postage...ytd.	(272.00)
Printing...ytd.	(198.41)
Society Memberships	(35.00)
Special Projects	300.00
NARA Income	96.00
Cassette Tape Library Fund	134.79
Library Fund	638.76

Current Total Balance	\$5995.60
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NEW/RENEWED MEMBER INFORMATION

Please add the following members to your SRVGS Handbook:

Ginnie Meyer
15 Thune Avenue
Moraga, CA 94556

Judy Gustafson
1925 Parkmont Dr.
Alamo, CA 94507
(925) 820-6092
Jujubeg@aol.com

Naomi Heller
8561 Ardmore Place
Dublin, CA 94568
(925) 829-5370

Guinevere C. Mills
c/o S. Fixmer
19380 Darcrest Court
Castro Valley, CA 94546
(510) 886-6828

We now have 180
paid members.

Please make the following changes in your handbook. E-mail address for Betty Vail - should be: bbvail@ix.netcom.com

e-mail for Ed O'Donnell: EOD4@aol.com

President's Message by Francie Lloyd

Did you find ghosts, goblins or witches among your ancestors - or at your front door on Hallowe'en - the evening before Allhallows or All Saints' Day? How about a pilgrim or a puritan for Thanksgiving?

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G. & C Merriam Co. 1951, defines pilgrim as, "A wanderer; wayfarer. Specifically, one who travels to some holy place as a devotee," and in *American History* as, "One of the Pilgrim Fathers".

Pilgrim Fathers are defined as, "the 102 separatists from the Church of England who landed from the Mayflower at Plymouth colony, the first settlement in New England, in 1620."

A Puritan is defined as "One who, in the time of Queen Elizabeth and the first two Stuarts, opposed traditional and formal usages, and advocated simpler forms of faith and worship than those established by law. One who practices or preaches a more rigorous or professedly purer moral code than that which prevails."

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Pocket Books, New York 1974, defines a Puritan as, "A member of a 16th or 17th century Protestant group in England and New England opposing formal usages of the Church of England. One who practices or preaches a stricter or professedly purer moral code than that which prevails."

The English Puritans comprised the first large group of people to come to America. Most were from the East of England. These were the first New Englanders, the first settlers of Massachusetts. They brought with them their town meeting form of local government and style of small independent settlements. Their speech patterns, congregational churches, style of architecture, and family values continue.

Fall harvest time, autumn colors, turkeys, cranberries, and the delightful aromas of Thanksgiving dinner and these strong willed people seem inseparable. Their mores have influenced all of our lives.

Our thanks to Peggy Gierke for setting our "harvest table" on meeting days and to Sue Hanck and new member Ginnie Mayer (Sue's sister-in-law) for their assistance.

Who's Who In SRVGS

President: Frances Lloyd	837-9382
1 st Vice President: Barbara Dittig	648-9364
e-mail: bdittig@aol.com	
2 nd Vice President: (Program)	
Louise Ford	376-4587
Bob Kay	945-7426
Vern Segelke	838-8570
3 rd Vice President (Membership)	
Barbara & Jack Johnson	837-2153
Recording Secretary: Virginia Rood	937-8659
Corresponding Secretary: Audrey Morgan	929-9442
Treasurer: Marilyn Tanner	376-6733
Parliamentarian: Barbara Dyer	820-9738
For the rest of the people involved in Special Interest Groups and the other necessary duties of the operation of this organization, please see your handbook.	

Mortuary Records by Virginia Sholin Smallwood

Permission granted to reprint

Mortuary Records are some of the best modern records available for people trying to get information on their ancestors. Now, I can hear the chorus of protest: "The person who gave the information was probably distraught, and there may be mistakes." True, and I would give that advice, too. But any records are subject to mistakes, and in my examination of scores of funeral records, I've not found significantly more mistakes in these records than in any others. If one thinks like a detective, no stone will go unturned and no clue will be overlooked. One simply gathers the evidence and assesses it.

To start your search, perhaps you would look in the Social Security Death Index to find where your relatives lived and when they died. These are the places where they were most likely taken care of by a funeral home. I sent out a lot of requests to funeral homes in towns where they lived. If there were several, I sent several. Each letter included a stamped self addresses envelope. If the person lived in a larger town where there are too many mortuaries, I will have to ask the family (if possible) the name of the mortuary or write to the funeral directors association of the town, or get a death certificate to see where they were buried. Usually, the cemetery can give the name and address of the funeral home.

Many funeral homes use a standard form for information. This form seems to have been in existence from at least the 1940's. It normally contains the following information:

(Continued on page 5)

Mortuary information (Continued)

Name, residence, charge to, address, order given by, how secured; if veteran, name of war; occupation; employer and address; social security number; date of death; date of birth; name of father; his birthplace; name of mother, her birthplace; date of funeral; services at; clergyman; religion of the deceased; birthplace; resided in the State (or U.S. or city or county) years and months; place of death; cause of death; contributory causes; certifying physician; his address; ship remains to; size of casket; manufactured by; cemetery or crematory; lot #, grave #, section #, block #, owner. It also has a section for all the things the funeral director has to know like which casket, clothing for burial, etc.

Sometimes, a mortuary will include a photocopy of an obituary, and in the case of the person with the form above, one was included. It gave the names and towns of the wife, all the children and a nephew. It also told of the couple's 50th wedding anniversary and the date on which it had occurred.

Mortuaries also have their own forms, and since the 1970s - perhaps earlier - one can often find a wealth of other genealogical information on the family. Here is additional information I've gleaned from the other forms that arrived from mortuaries:

A 1984 form included: Organizations, children and their addresses, brothers and sisters and their addresses, other relations and their addresses, how many grandchildren, how many great-grandchildren, resided (contained where the person lived at various times of her life) place of service (funeral), day, pall bearers, honorary bearers, music selections, singers, organist.

In addition to all of the above, a 1993 form included: Military information (when entered, discharged, rank) (this mortuary even typed in the first names of all survivor's spouses). Background data (more about the person's military background: i.e. "Grad from CCCHS (The local high school). Was in Marine Corps 22 years and was a captain. Two tours in Viet Nam. Moved back to Clay Center, June of 1992", Hospital/institution.

The next example was for a death in 1987. It included all of the above plus: Residence of the deceased, deceased came from; what Fraternal Orders? Name of spouse and when and where there were married (somebody even wrote in the name of his first wife and when and where they were married). Each piece of information is processed. If it says a son was living in Cheyenne, Wyoming, I write in the son's database, "Residence; Cheyenne, Wyoming and the date. For the source I write the name of the funeral home, for whom the records were made and the name of the informant.

As one gathers these records, a time line on each of the children can be established. Finding each of these descendants becomes much easier. The bigger the families, the better these records work, because someone is always dying and so new records are made.

The amazing thing is that all this information usually only costs the stamp to send it and the stamp to get it back! While I always ask to be informed of any charges, funeral homes rarely charge anything. Some will not respond at all, though, and a person has to accept reality. A few will not share anything, such as the mortuary that took care of my own mother and her parents! They cite privacy as the reason and will not budge. It is their right. These are private records of the company and they do not have to share anything.

The "Yellow Book" or "Blue Book" is the resource for locating mortuaries (other than on the Internet). You can often get your own copy of these books by going to a local mortuary and ask if you can have their old copy. Most genealogical libraries have one of these books, also.

Hidden Sources: Body Transit Records and Coroner's Inquests By Laura Szucs Pfeiffer

Ancestry Daily News March 14, 2001.

Editor's Notes: the following are two of more than 100 record types cited in Hidden Sources: Family History in Unlikely Places, by Laura Szucs Pfeiffer.

In an effort to stem the spread of communicable diseases, local governments in many states required that bodies arriving in their jurisdiction be registered. The resulting records cover a large number of individuals. As B-Ann Moorhouse, CG, FGBS, suggested in an article in the NYG&B Newsletter (Moorhouse, 1992), "The Board of Health of the City of New York required that any body arriving in Manhattan via ship, train, or even local ferry be registered. Thus, the vacationer who died out West and whose body was being shipped back for burial in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, the New Jersey resident or Staten Island housewife whose body was being shipped across the river for burial in upstate New York, the Civil War soldier and sailor whose bodies were being shipped back to new England for burial, all were registered with the City." Moorhouse also notes that the registrations also applied to bodies being shipped in the opposite direction. An example given in this article is that of the transit of Abraham Lincoln, whose body passed through new York City on 24 April 1865. Biographical information included in the Lincoln record includes his age

(Continued on page 6)

(52 years, 2 months), nativity (Kentucky), place of death (Washington, DC), date of death (15 April 1865) disease (pistol shot), place of internment (Springfield, Ill.) And name and address of person having charge of the body.
(P. Relyea).

Bodies in Transit, the records for New York City covering the years 1859 to 1894, have been microfilmed and are available at the Municipal Archives of the city of New York, and through the Family History Library. Body transit records are also available for a number of other locations. Transit permits may also be interfiled with death records in the place where the burial took place.

Selected Reading: Moorehouse, B-Ann. "Little Publicized New York City Sources," The NYG & B Newsletter, New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (Summer 1992, p. 11)

Morgan, George "Using Burial Permits as Resources" Ancestry.com Library.

Coroner's Inquests - what you can learn

Although coroners are often associated with murder, their records should not be overlooked. A coroner may have been called in to investigate deaths occurring under the following circumstances: accident, suicide, sudden death when in apparent good health, unattended by a licensed physician at time of death, suspicious or unusual causes, poisoning or adverse reaction to drugs or alcohol, disease constituting a threat to public health, employment related illness or injury, during medical diagnostic or therapeutic procedures, in any prison or penal institution or while in police custody, dead on arrival at hospital, unclaimed bodies, any body brought into a new medico-legal jurisdiction without proper medical certification, or any body to be cremated, dissected, or buried at sea.

As with most records, the contents and condition of an individual's inquest file may vary greatly from county to county, and even from year to year.

Many inquest files contain sworn statements made by family and friends of the deceased and any other witnesses present at the time of death or when a body was discovered. A 1935 Chicago inquest, for example, included a form requesting the full name of the deceased along with the person's address, age, sex, marital status, color, birthplace, length of residence in the United States, length of residence in the city, occupation, employer, past occupation, wages or salary due, amount of life insurance and to whom it was payable, value of personal and real estate property, level of education, number of dependents, and 10 questions regarding the decedent's physical and mental health at the time of death.

Personnel in the county coroner's office should be able to provide information on the location of files.

Tape Review by Tape Librarian Betty Vale

As cassette librarian, I was surprised to discover a binder among my tapes. It contains information on the Oregon-California Trails Association and a copy of the April 1993 edition of the tombstone Epitaph.

The information about the OCTA includes an explanation of their purposes: (1) to preserve trails used by emigrant travelers going West (2) to promote research and education (3) to support the OCTA headquarters and library in Independence, Missouri.

There is also a membership application which I am certain you can copy. The binder includes a map of the trails that were guides, autobiographies, and newspaper accounts. You may find an ancestor listed as the author of one of these documents.

The newspaper articles give lively accounts of the emigrants: who they were, why they came, how they lived on the trail, etc. It also includes a Calendar of Travel in which samples of trail life are presented the same way they happened, "day by day and mile by mile" in the words of the song, 'Down the Oregon Trail'.

Editorial note: For more information about the Oregon-California Trails Association on the Internet see: <http://www.oregontrailcenter.org>



Internet Info

Here is a resource for a very good map of the Indian Trails in early North Carolina:
<http://ncnatural.com/maps/pathsandtowns.jpg>.

The 300 Million names database: Contains many links for North and South Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee databases and miscellaneous - marriages, cemeteries, pension lists. War rosters, LOTS of links..
<http://members.tripod.com/~rosters/>

Check out www.pac-info.com. Public records database with current & genealogical information. Very interesting.

A website that may help you gain insight into how our ancestors lived and how things were done back then: <http://waltonfeed.com/old/>. This is worth browsing just to see the incredible links to old methods, recipes, processes... how to make candles, and MANY wonderful resources.

Here is a website that lists every town in Massachusetts with the original name, changed to, etc.

http://www.vineyard.net/vineyard/history/allen/mass_cities_full.htm

British Census Online

The Public Record office has announced that after months of painstaking work, the 1901 Census returns for England and Wales will be available online over the Internet. This huge task of digitizing the original census images and creating an index to 32 million names is the result of a partnership between the Public Record Office and QinetiQ (formerly the larger part of the Defense Evaluation and Research Agency) and is major step towards the Public Record Office's vision of putting records online to reach a wider audience worldwide.

From 2 January 2002, visitors to the 1901 Census Web site will be able to search the index by name, place, address, institution or vessel, free of charge. Once the desired subject is found, for a small charge visitors can view a digital image of the original census return and the transcribed details for an individual or order a copy of either. The feedback from the successful operation of a pilot project using the 1891 Census returns has allowed us to develop this technology to make it more user-friendly. Full details of how the census will work, including the cost, can be found at <http://www.census.pro.gov.uk>.

Some of the statistics from the census, taken on 31 March 1901: the population was 32,527,843. The population breakdown was 52% women to 48% men, and the density of population was 558 per square mile - compared to 152 per square mile in 1801. Of the total population 1.04% were born in foreign countries, compared to 0.67 in 1881 and 0.8% in 1891.

Comparable statistics for England and Wales in 1999 show a population of 52.7 million, and a split of 49% male to 51% female. The population density was 349 per square kilometer - around 900 per square mile. Ethnic minority groups made up 6.4% of the overall UK population (although changes in definition since 1901 make this measurement a less accurate comparison).

Censuses containing personal information on individuals have been taken every 10 years since 1841, and because they contain personal information, are subject to closure for 100 years. The public Record Office holds census returns for England, Wales and the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands

The Naturalization Process

from: Family Tree Finders, by Rhonda R. McClure
rhondam@sodamail.com 25 January 2001.

Not surprising, the laws and acts that determine who was naturalized and when and how it took place have changed over the years. Some of those changes were directly related

to various influxes of large numbers of individuals of a specific ethnic origin. Others have been related directly to the large number of people flocking to what they thought was the new world.

Naturalization records were begun in 1790 by an act of Congress. The act was passed on 26 March 1790. It made it possible for any free white person over the age of 21 who had been in the United States for 2 years to be granted citizenship.

Through the years there have been additional acts passed by Congress that have affected the naturalization process:

1798 - Declaration of intention needed 5 years before citizenship; residence of 14 years.

1802 - Declaration of intention needed 3 years before citizenship; residence of 5 years; children automatically citizens when parents were naturalized.

1824 - Children of foreign birth who had lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years could be naturalized on their 21st birthday.

1888 - Law allowing the expulsion of aliens was passed.

1906 - The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization created and records are centralized.

1922 - Alien women who were married to US citizens could apply for naturalization after one year of residency.

1924 - The National Origins Act - first immigration quota law.

1952 - The Immigration and Naturalization Act passed. These are just a few of the milestones over the years that affect naturalization.

Prior to 1906 the naturalization process was not centralized. What this means for you is that the records could be in different localities, especially if your ancestor moved around.

It is likely that he waited five years before applying for his Declaration of Intent. This would be the first record to try to find.

Many of these records may have been centralized in the closest National Archives branch to where your ancestor lived and was archived. Many of these records have been microfilmed. It would be a good idea to check your local Family History Center. If your ancestor moved around, then you will want to check at the county courthouse for each locality he may have lived in.

Printed in the Diablo Descendants Newsletter, Vol 16, No. 7, July 2001. Newsletter of the Contra Costa County genealogical Society.

Before Ellis Island by Peggy Rossi

Ellis Island is synonymous with immigration into the United States, but Ellis Island did not open for business until 1 January 1892. Before that, there was Castle Garden, which opened in 1855. *Castle Garden is located in Battery Park, New York City.*

Castle Garden closed in April of 1890 and Ellis Island opened in 1892. Where did people go for the period of time in between?

Brian Andersson, a specialist in immigration research and former executive director of the Ellis Island Restoration Commission, states that immigrants were processed at The Barge office, a twenty-year old building located in Battery Park that was woefully inadequate for the need. Ellis Island opened not a day too soon.

Yet the Barge Office was used once again beginning 16 June 1897 after a fire destroyed the original Ellis Island pine buildings. New brick and fireproof buildings opened in December 1900 and immigration services returned to Ellis Island. The Barge Office was torn down sometime in the 1920s.

So if your ancestors came between June 1897 and December 1900, they probably never set foot on Ellis Island.

(From the July 2001 Santa Clara County Historical & Genealogical Society Newsletter.)

Added Notes About Ellis Island

From the Ellis Island and Statue of Liberty Guidebook

As superior as the new facilities were in comparison to the old accommodations, immigrants now faced stricter laws than ever before. The Contract Labor Law of 1885 was stiffened to exclude immigrants who were entering the country at the encouragement of American employers, and it was illegal for American employers to advertise. A more comprehensive immigration law was passed in the spring of 1891.

While steamship companies had previously been held responsible for screening their passengers before leaving Europe, now they were also made responsible for returning deportees to their homeland and for the cost of their food and lodging while there were in detention here. Aliens who entered the country illegally or became public charges within a year of their arrival due to some preexisting condition before they landed were to be deported. Additional amendments were added to the law in 1893.

The combination of this stricter law, a cholera scare in 1892 and the financial panic of 1893 followed by several years of economic depression began to slow the number of immigrants arriving in New York until the turn of the century.

SAN RAMON VALLEY
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 305
DIABLO, CA 94528-0305

FIRST CLASS MAIL